

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**GOALS, COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS FOR ACHIEVING**  
**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of a review of South Africa's framework for sustainable development: the conventions, policies, laws, strategies, and related initiatives. It presents insights into the nature and scope of this framework, showing how it is informed by priorities, goals and targets set in international, regional and national policy arenas. Against this background, the chapter features stakeholder perception of, and responses to, the sustainable development framework. Stakeholder responses highlight some of the key strengths and weaknesses of our framework, as well as offer ideas on how the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) can assist to build on, strengthen and operationalise the policies, laws and strategies that aim to place South Africa on a sustainable development path.

It should however be noted that this document is meant to encourage discussion rather than present a definitive statement on how the NSSD should look or what it should focus on. Only through a process of dialogue and debate will it be possible to move to a point of greater consensus about the strategy's scope and nature, which in turn would influence the choice of strategic and crosscutting priorities that need to be targeted over the next 10-20 years. An inclusive approach to NSSD formulation would ensure a higher level of commitment from all South Africa's to progressing toward sustainable development.

The chapter addresses the following:

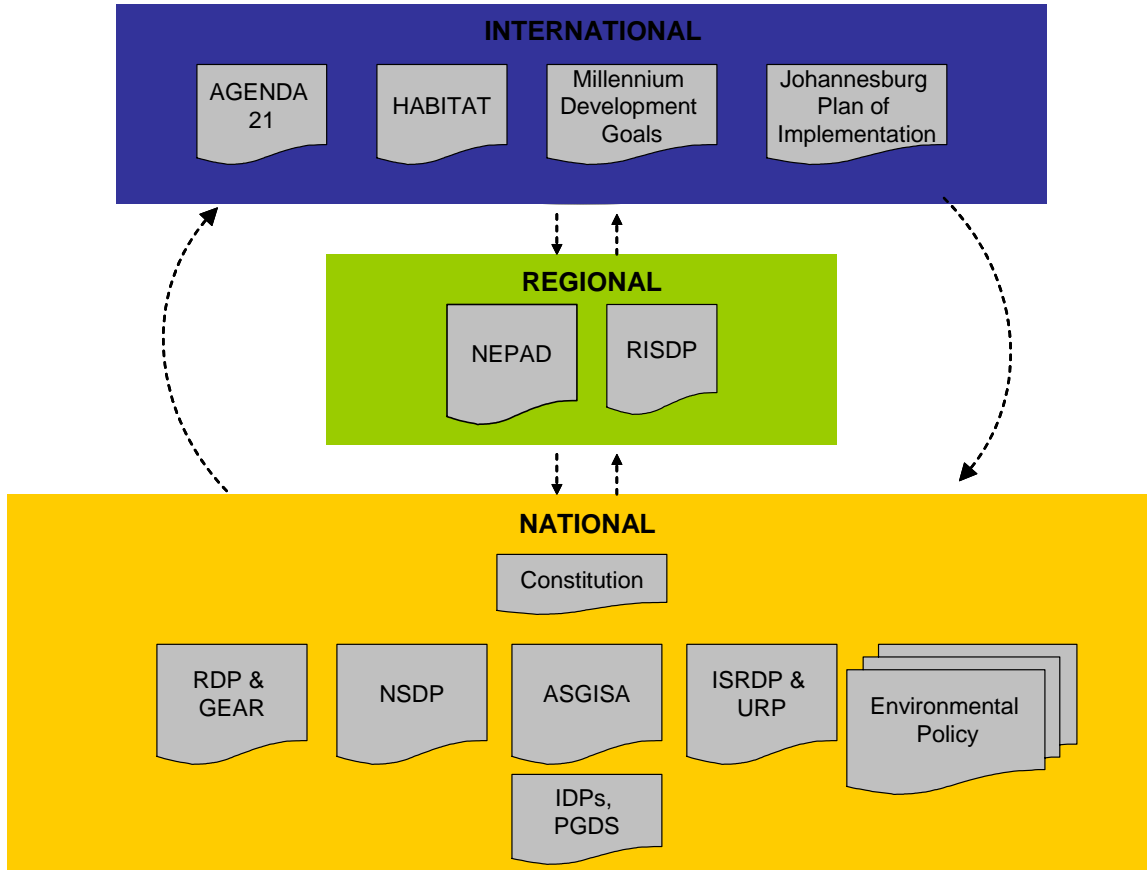
1. Sustainable Development Framework: a description of the current overarching policies, legislation and strategies
2. Overview of national and international targets
3. Stakeholder reactions to the framework and how targets are being pursued
4. Strategic considerations/options for action to achieve sustainable development

The first two sections of the chapter are based on a policy review undertaken in November and December 2005. The third section draws on written submissions made to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) during the course of last year, participants' comments at the multi-stakeholder workshops as well as a series of one-on-one interviews with several key stakeholders conducted over the past few months. The stakeholder input should not be seen as definitive or exhaustive but rather represent an initial scoping of people's perspectives on sustainable development framework, in general, and their expectations of the NSSD process in particular. The fourth and final section presents a number of strategic sectoral and cross-cutting priorities and options that could be taken into consideration in developing a workable plan of action. This sections draws on information contained in the 2005 South African Environmental Outlook, which is in the final stages of production.

## 2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: A DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT OVERARCHING POLICY, LEGISLATION AND STRATEGIES

An extensive international environment and development agenda, and national development imperatives have shaped South Africa's policy framework for sustainable development. South Africa boasts a substantial body of policy and legislation that is relevant to sustainable

development, but it is acknowledged that much of it is sector specific and fragmented. This section aims to provide background on the major international, regional (Southern African Development Community and Africa) and national policies, and key programmes, that define this framework. Figure 1 depicts the major policies at all three levels. While it is not possible to describe all components of the framework, a detailed list of policies, strategies, legislation and selected programmes is provided in Appendix 1 for reference purposes.



**Figure 1: Policy framework for sustainable development at international, regional and national levels. NEPAD = New Partnership for Africa’s Development; RISDP = Regional Strategic Indicative Development Plan; RDP = Reconstruction and Development Programme; NSDP = National Spatial Development Perspective; ASGISA = Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa; ISRDP = Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme; URP = Urban Renewal Programme; IDP = Integrated Development Plan; PGDS = Provincial Growth and Development Strategy.**

## 2.1 International framework

### ***Rio Declaration and Agenda 21***

Agenda 21<sup>1</sup> is the global plan of action to achieve sustainable development. It was the major output of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) held in 1992, and indicated the emergence of clear international consensus on a range of environment and development issues, including domestic social and economic policies, international cooperation, citizen participation, gender, poverty, sustainable agriculture, desertification and land degradation. Although South Africa was not officially represented at the conference, it has subsequently formally adopted Agenda 21.

### ***HABITAT Agenda***

The Habitat Agenda was launched at the UN Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, Turkey in 1996. It included goals, principles and commitments to turn the vision of sustainable settlements into reality, and was endorsed by South Africa in 1996. A sustainable human settlement is one where all have adequate shelter, a healthy and safe environment, basic services, and productive and freely chosen employment. The Habitat Agenda and Agenda 21 clearly have much in common, as both use sustainable development as a basic principle and link the global and the local. These main principles and objectives of these agendas were subsequently incorporated under the Millennium Declaration in 2000.

### ***Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals***

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, world leaders agreed on a far-reaching plan to support global development objectives for the new century. The Millennium Declaration<sup>2</sup> sets out the key challenges facing humanity and committed 189 states, including South Africa, to eight development goals containing 18 targets and 48 indicators (see Table 1). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focus disparate development agendas on a set of global priorities, and serve as a powerful political tool to hold governments and international institutions accountable.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2000). United Nations Millennium Declaration. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 55th Session, 18 September 2000.

**Table 1: Millennium Development Goals and Targets**

Goal		Target
<u>Goal 1:</u>	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<u>Target 1:</u> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day <u>Target 2:</u> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
<u>Goal 2:</u>	Achieve universal primary education	<u>Target 3:</u> Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
<u>Goal 3:</u>	Promote gender equality and empower women	<u>Target 4:</u> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015
<u>Goal 4:</u>	Reduce child mortality	<u>Target 5:</u> Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
<u>Goal 5:</u>	Improve maternal health	<u>Target 6:</u> Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
<u>Goal 6:</u>	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	<u>Target 7:</u> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS <u>Target 8:</u> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
<u>Goal 7:</u>	Ensure environmental sustainability	<u>Target 9:</u> Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources <u>Target 10:</u> Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation <u>Target 11:</u> Have achieved, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
<u>Goal 8:</u>	Develop a global partnership for development	<u>Target 12:</u> Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction—both nationally and internationally) <u>Target 13:</u> Address the special needs of the least developed countries (includes tariff-and quota-free access for exports enhanced program of debt relief for HIPC and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction) <u>Target 14:</u> Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states (through the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions) <u>Target 15:</u> Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term <u>Target 16:</u> In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth <u>Target 17:</u> In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries <u>Target 18:</u> In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Source: United Nations General Assembly (2000)

### ***Johannesburg Declaration and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation***

In 2002, 10 years after the Rio Earth Summit, South Africa hosted the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The Johannesburg Earth Summit brought the MDGs into the sustainable development arena and sought to find an effective balance between economic, social

and environmental objectives to development. A major outcome of the WSSD was the adoption of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI)<sup>3</sup>, which outlined actions for further implementation of Agenda 21, the MDGs and the implementation of international agreements since 1992. It included several new targets on access to sanitation, marine ecosystems, fish stocks, sustainable production and consumption, biodiversity and desertification. During the WSSD a total of 251 voluntary partnerships were announced in support of sustainable development. Partnerships were forged around issues such as water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity and ecosystem management<sup>4</sup>.

The JPOI also emphasized the importance of regional action-oriented initiatives for sustainable development, and recognizes the importance of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a framework for promoting sustainability on the African continent.

## ***2.2 Regional framework***

The policy framework for sustainable development at regional level is less well defined. However, recent efforts, including the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and the Commission for Africa have resulted in a considerable improvement in the policy framework for the continent and region.

### ***New Partnership for Africa's Development***

The JPOI recognized that sustainable development had proved elusive for many African countries, with poverty remaining a major challenge to human development and most countries having failed to benefit from globalization. Poverty has exacerbated environmental degradation throughout the continent<sup>5</sup> whilst globalization and regionalization of economies and associated technological improvements have eroded the symbiotic relationship between people and environment<sup>6</sup>. The combination of poverty, climate variability, natural disasters, institutional weaknesses and unfair trading practices in developed countries have increased Africans' vulnerability to environmental change. As a result, increasing numbers of African countries are facing water stress and scarcity and land degradation. These significant challenges have seen a positive response by African countries. Launched in 2002, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) set the framework for economic growth and sustainable development in Africa, and pledged African leaders to eradicate poverty and place the continent on the path to sustainable development<sup>7</sup>.

### ***SADC Vision and Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan***

The Southern African region is characterized by two overriding trends, namely increasing poverty and food insecurity, and the lack of environmental management capacity and implementation relative to human development. The low levels of human development in Southern Africa have

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<sup>3</sup> World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). Johannesburg Plan of Implementation ([http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit\\_docs/2309\\_planfinal.htm](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2309_planfinal.htm))

<sup>4</sup> United Nations (2003). The Road from Johannesburg. United Nations Division of Sustainable Development, January 2003.

<sup>5</sup> AMCEN/UNEP (2003). *Africa Environment Outlook*. African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. United Nations Environment Programme. Available at <http://www.grida.no/aeo>

<sup>6</sup> South African Development Community (2005). *Draft Southern African Development Community Environment Outlook*. Unpublished report.

<sup>7</sup> NEPAD Official Website: <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/home.php>

resulted in the region's goals for sustainable development focussing on equity issues<sup>8</sup>. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) vision for sustainable development reflects this reality. It specifies that the region must accelerate economic growth with greater equity and self-reliance; improve health, income and living conditions of the poor majority; and ensure equitable and sustainable use of the environment and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan is guided by the SADC vision and provides strategic direction for programmes, policies and activities. It also provides member states with a development agenda for social and economic policies for the next 15 years.

### *2.3 National framework*

The concept of sustainable development is gradually finding its way into policy and legislation in South Africa. This is reflected in several policies and laws that have included sustainable development as a guiding principle. For instance:

- The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) advocated a people-centred approach to development that recognizes the critical importance of using natural resources in a sustainable manner in order to achieve socio-economic goals.
- The Development Facilitation Act encourages 'environmentally sustainable land development practices and processes'.
- The Urban Development Framework has 'sustainable settlements' as a key objective.
- The White Paper on Local Government sees environmental sustainability as an integral component of integrated development planning.
- The Water Act recognizes two guaranteed water rights – the environmental reserve and water for basic rights.

The major components of the existing national framework are described below, and a more detailed list relevant to the development priorities in the four pillars of sustainable development is attached as Appendix 1.

#### *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*

The Constitution (1996) provides the point of departure for policy and law-making in the country, contains far-reaching clauses relevant to sustainability. Embedded in the Bill of Rights are rights to property, housing, food, water, health care and a clean environment, amongst others. Specifically, the environmental right contained within Section 24 (Box XX) makes it clear that there is a duty on society to balance the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

#### **Box 1. Sustainable Development and the Environmental Right – Section 24**

“Everyone has the right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that...secures ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources, while promoting justifiable economic and social development”

<sup>8</sup> Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment (2003). *Environmental Impact Assessment in southern Africa*. Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment (SAIEA), Windhoek.

The commitment of the supreme law of South Africa to sustainable development and environmental sustainability makes it necessary for other laws and policies to follow a similar direction.

### ***From RDP, GEAR to ASGISA***

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (1993), was the first post-Apartheid socio-economic policy and development planning framework for rebuilding South Africa. The RDP adopted a broad, basic needs approach to development that included all three pillars of sustainable development, and thus is often referred to as South Africa's first attempt at a national strategy for sustainable development<sup>9</sup>. It focussed on meeting basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy, and democratizing the state and society. This was followed by the 1994 White Paper on Reconstruction and Development. It was, however, seen as inadequate to deliver the required economic growth and so a macro-economic intervention was needed to accelerate growth. This paved the way for South Africa's macro-economic policy, as is set out in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (1996). The GEAR strategy established certain economic targets, including a budget deficit target, and outlined additional financial reforms, such as improvements in revenue collection. An important focus of GEAR was on restoring the international credibility of the economy.

Since then, South Africa has committed to achieving the targets set out in the UN's Millennium Development Goals, which include amongst others, halving unemployment and poverty by 2014. The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), launched in 2006, focuses on meeting these goals. It is a

*“limited set of interventions that will act as catalysts to shared and accelerated growth and development”<sup>10</sup>.*

ASGISA demands an average growth rate of 4,5% from 2006 to 2009, rising to 6% from 2010 to 2015. Part of the R372-billion that will be spent through ASGISA, will be spent on accelerated infrastructure investment in underdeveloped urban and rural areas through existing initiatives, such as the Municipal Infrastructure Grant and the Expanded Public Works Programme, to improve service delivery in the areas of the second economy.

### ***Integrated Sustainable Rural Development and Urban Renewal Programmes***

The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development and Urban Renewal Programmes (ISRDP and URP respectively) are cross-sectoral presidential priority projects focused on poverty eradication. The programmes aim to improve governance at local level and have identified 13 and eight priority poverty nodes in rural and urban areas respectively. The programmes were launched in 2001.

### ***National Spatial Development Perspective***

With several government departments developing their own spatial planning perspectives for guiding spending on development and infrastructure, for example the Housing Atlas by the Department of Housing, the Spatial development Initiatives of the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Environmental Potential Atlas (ENPAT) by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, there was a need for a coordinating mechanism for these initiatives. The National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP), commissioned by the Office of the President,

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<sup>9</sup> Urquhart, P., (2001). Agenda 21. Background Paper: Integrated strategic, development and spatial planning.

<sup>10</sup> Thabo Mbeki (2006). State of the Nation Address, Friday 3 February 2006.

is intended to fulfil this role. It has mapped areas where development should take place and where government should be directing its spending. This in turn informs other spatial planning processes such as the provincial growth and development strategies and integrated development plans of local government.

### ***King Code of Corporate Governance***

The King code of corporate governance aims to promote the highest standards of corporate conduct in South Africa<sup>11</sup>. The code mirrors international trends in that it includes the “triple-bottom-line” approach, embracing economic, environmental and social aspects of the company’s business. Thus, non-financial reporting becomes a criterion of good governance. The approach requires that companies consider stakeholders, who need not be contractually linked to the company, when formulating strategies. The scope of the code includes all listed companies, banks, financial and insurance entities, and parastatals. The review of the corporate code of governance was carried out as it was considered of paramount importance that companies understand and adopt the principles set out in Chapter 1 of the National Environmental Management Act. Apart from the regulatory need to apply the principles, it is recommended that their application constitutes good corporate governance given that they “reflect a holistic approach to the environment, social justice and the protection of rights”<sup>12</sup>

### ***Environmental policy and legislation***

South Africa has established a solid foundation of environmental policy and legislation. Following the first democratic elections in 1994, the Consultative National Environmental Policy Process (CONNAPP) was launched in 1995<sup>13</sup>. The result of this process was the White Paper on National Environmental Management, published in 1997. The National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) embedded the concepts of participatory, co-operative and developmental governance.

Following the release of NEMA, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) embarked on a Law Reform Programme in order to provide a consolidated legislative framework for environmental management in South Africa. The new suite of legislation, developed under NEMA, is aimed at promoting sustainable development and has wide-ranging implications for national, provincial and local spheres of government. The new suite of legislation has moved away from general policy and broad legislation, like NEMA, towards more specialized legislation to tackle particular resource issues such as biodiversity and air quality.

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) regulations (R1182 and R1183) under the Environment Conservation Act (No. 73 of 1989), and those under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (No. 28 of 2002) govern all development activities that may have an impact on the biophysical and social environments. EIAs are seen to be an important tool to ensure that development is environmentally and socially sustainable. Updated EIA regulations under NEMA have been compiled and are awaiting Ministerial approval.

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<sup>11</sup> Urquhart, P., (2002). Agenda 21 Review. Background paper: National Governance Framework for Environmental Management.

<sup>12</sup> Business Co-ordinating Forum for the WSSD (2001) *National governance framework for implementing sustainable development*. Unpublished position paper. .

<sup>13</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (2005). South Africa Environment Outlook. Unpublished Draft Report.

### **3. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GOALS AND TARGETS**

As alluded to in the section above, the setting of goals and targets has increasingly become a feature of national and international sustainable development policy in recent years. This has been borne out of a growing need to establish practical and concrete milestones for reversing mounting global ecological, social, and economic and governance challenges. Whereas the Rio Summit in 1992 galvanised the resolve of the world to address these challenges, and Agenda 21 provided a strategic plan of action, it was the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 that committed countries to a comprehensive plan with priorities and goals. The MDGs and the subsequent Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, establish a core set of global priorities that needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency. These international agreements went further by attaching specific goals and target to each of the priorities. The international priorities, goals and targets that underpin multilateral agreements have in turn influenced regional and national priorities for sustainable development.

Appendix 2 provides an overview of key national, regional and international goals and targets. This synthesis highlights the wide range of goals and target that inform the sustainable development framework in South Africa.

### **4. STAKEHOLDERS' REACTIONS TO THE FRAMEWORK AND HOW TARGETS ARE BEING PURSUED**

The success of the NSSD process relies on stakeholder participation. Like the strategy which it informs, this consultative process is multi-faceted and iterative. Participation occurs through a range of methods, including structured multi-stakeholder workshops, facilitated focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and written submissions.

The process to develop a NSSD for South Africa commenced with inter-governmental consultations to agree on which department/s would coordinate the drafting of the strategy. The DEAT was mandated to act as secretariat for the NSSD process with the Department of Foreign Affairs taking a lead on multi-lateral negotiations. This has been followed by two consultative workshops for stakeholders from all sectors in society in order to provide guidance on the scope and content of the NSSD. This input was supplemented by written submissions from stakeholders and one-on-one interviews with representatives in a range of sectors, including business, civil society, research and government. Although not extensive, stakeholder interviews provide a useful starting point from which to ascertain reactions to, and application of, the country's policy and legislative framework for sustainable development priorities.

An examination of stakeholders' verbal and written responses provides a number of useful insights: how the sustainable development framework and its priorities are viewed; their appropriateness in addressing national priorities; and how the framework is applied. It also highlights what stakeholders expect of the NSSD. This section draws out some of the key responses from stakeholders.

#### *4.1 Stakeholders' view of the sustainable development framework and its priorities*

Stakeholders' responses presented below are clustered according to views regarding the nature and scope of the framework, sector specific issues, and strategy implementation.

##### *The nature and scope of the framework*

- **Good policy and legislation is in place** for sustainable development in South Africa, but strategies for implementation are commonly not in place.
- The scope of the sustainable development framework is **very broad** and therefore poses **challenges for coordination, implementation and monitoring**. Addressing sustainability in a comprehensive manner is difficult and should be **approached strategically**.
- There is a need for a dialogue at national level on **what is meant by sustainability** in the **South African context**. This would include a review of existing definitions such as 'economy' and 'poverty' so that they encompass the informal and subsistence economies.
- Policy and legislation for sustainable development is not always in support of achieving the **country's obligation** in meeting the Millennium Declaration Goals.
- The framework includes policy and legislation which are **contradictory or overlapping**, resulting in **uncertainty or duplication** of efforts (e.g. mining applications would require an Environmental Management Programme Report and an Environmental Impact Assessment). Planning systems should be streamlined with environmental management so that they complement rather than work against each other.
- There are **coordination problems between departments** when developing policy, legislation and strategies (e.g. the Sustainable Mining Strategy being developed by Department of Minerals and Energy must be taken into account by Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in the NSSD process).
- Sustainable development requires a **paradigm shift** which acknowledges the importance of natural resources in terms of their **ecosystem services**.

##### *Sector specific issues*

- **International frameworks** for sustainable development performance in certain sectors (e.g. mining) are in place and provide guidance.
- South African framework is not able to effectively respond to developmental needs of entrepreneurship, and in particular small business, because of the **many legislative requirements**.
- The **sustainable extraction** of natural resources should be expanded to cover all high impact economic sectors, especially in the marine environment.

##### *Implementation of the framework*

- **Social requirements** (e.g. HIV/AIDS programmes, Black Economic Empowerment) in policy and legislation for business are often of an international standard.
- The **lack of capacity and human resources** constrains institutions ability to implement of current legislation and respond to priorities.
- **Limited coordination** between government, business and communities results in poor social development and management of impacts.

- There is **limited follow up** on the introduction of legislation through, among others, the promulgation of regulations.
- The **political system** does not support long-term sustainable development planning and implementation, i.e. development agendas are influenced by five-year political terms.

#### 4.2 Sustainable development framework response to priorities

Stakeholders were asked whether South Africa's framework for sustainable development responds to the country's sustainability priorities. Their responses are presented below.

##### *The optimistic response...*

- Some **government departments** (e.g. DTI, DME, and DEAT) are **playing a greater role** in promoting sustainable development.
- The **new tools** provided by the Biodiversity Act and incentives by the Protected Areas Act provide important mechanisms for meeting the challenges of minimising the loss and degradation of natural habitats.

##### *Yes, but...*

- South Africa is a signatory to many **international conventions**, some of which have **yet to be implemented**, e.g. International Biosafety Convention. Treaties are generally **implemented in an ad hoc manner** and in instances where it is driven by a champion.
- The framework does respond to many of the international and national priorities for sustainable development but **not in a strategic and integrated manner**.
- The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa needs to **emphasise equity, and highlight sustainable development**.
- Significant progress has been made in the **social development sector** (e.g. health and education), however implementation must be **maintained and expanded**.
- There is a need to **integrate** sustainable development obligations into planning processes.
- Although there is policy for sustainable **energy options**, it is **not being promoted**.
- There is a need to **enforce compliance** with legislation. Penalties for non-compliance are improving but it is still 'cheaper' not to comply. The justice system needs to be strengthened to support the implementation of legislation.
- Programmes and funding available for specific infrastructure and services, but there is **poor capacity within sectors for strategy development and implementation**.
- Although government is setting standards for training, more attention is needed to **support skills development** through the Further Education and Training system, including additional funding assistance.
- Learnerships must be followed by **exit opportunities** for employment and service to communities.
- The **environmental fiscal reform process** for full cost accounting has been initiated but appears to have lost momentum because of its heavy reliance on the National Treasury to implement. In addition, the process must include a greater range of stakeholders to ensure that externalities are accounted for. This would allow for the consideration of upstream and downstream socio-economic and environmental costs and benefits of development.
- Despite the gains made by the GEAR strategy, **employment creation targets** have not been met and unemployment remains high.

*The cautionary response...*

- There is a **need to implement the sustainable development principles** in current legislation, including the Constitution of South Africa and the National Environmental Management Act.
- Current **indicators of welfare** (e.g. Gross Domestic Product) do not adequately internalise less conventional and formalised measures of human development such as subsistence farming.
- In some instances, sustainable development policy and legislation is uncoordinated and therefore displays **poor integration** resulting in **gaps and contradictions**, e.g. the way land is managed has impacts on water resources.
- Policy and legislation has created **unfunded mandates** where local government authorities cannot adequately implement or meet requirements, e.g. implementation of air quality legislation. This situation has been exacerbated by the lack of capacity and demands for service delivery.
- **Landcare project** is insufficient to deal with the land reform process and reduce land degradation.
- There is an **over-reliance** on prescribed mechanisms for implementation of international agreements, e.g. carbon trading for combating climate change.
- South Africa needs to move towards more sustainable energy production and consumption as it is a **leader in the energy sector** in the southern African region and a major contributor to **global climate change**.
- Certain policies and strategies fall short in providing direction and **setting necessary targets**, e.g. Renewable Energy Strategy targets are low, and Radioactive Management Policy only lists options.
- **Sustainable consumption** is not being addressed in policies and initiatives promoting economic growth and development.
- There are instances where the regulatory authority is also the implementing agent of projects. Questions of **objectivity and transparency** have been raised.
- Key sectors such as transport that have a **high impact** on sustainable development are not actively participating in the NSSD process.
- There is a need to **change business culture** to adopt sustainable practices.
- There is a heavy reliance on implementing agencies for project delivery. There is therefore a need to **capacitate communities** so that they can better respond to priorities and take responsibility for their development.
- Projects and programmes must be redesigned so that government's role over the long-term is one of **facilitation and support**.
- **Poor role differentiation** when introducing new community development initiatives results in confusion and conflict, e.g. community development workers.
- There is limited funding to **enable civil society** to meaningfully participate in development planning and implementation.
- There is a **mismatch** between skills development and meeting the capacity needs of national economic priority sectors such as Information and Communication Technology.
- Institutions and forums for coordinating sustainable development initiatives are not always **representative of all key sectors** of society.
- An approach to governance which is **consultative and builds on partnerships** is not being actively encouraged by government departments.

- **Literacy levels** amongst those responsible for generating family income and food security and providing care for those in special need are low. This requires further attention by the Adult Basic Education and Training programme.

#### *4.3 How stakeholders respond to and apply the sustainable development framework*

Acknowledging that a framework for sustainable development is meant to influence attitudes and behaviour, and encourage positive change in citizens, stakeholders were asked how they and their institutions engaged and applied the sustainability policy, legislation and related strategies, programmes and plans.

Stakeholders engage the framework in the following ways:

- **Facilitate between sectors** on sustainable development issues.
- **Interpret** the principles of sustainable development to make sure that is understandable to constituents (e.g. the 7 capital model speaks better to business than the triple bottom line).
- **Public-private partnership** for priority skills acquisition is achieved through the Further Education and Training colleges.
- Projects that receive foreign investment are generally required to **adhere to social responsibility criteria**. This means that the investment in the country is increasingly including sustainable development options.
- The **education of communities** regarding their rights to development and a healthy environment, including access to information. This is important as ordinary people are unable to gain **access to information** since systems that are currently available are inadequate.
- Stakeholders support the framework through **advocacy, research and documentation** on key priorities that affect community development such as waste and energy.
- International agreements and national policy has been developed with **multi-stakeholder input**.
- **Monitoring** of government performance on meeting their target and obligations.
- There is **participation in political processes and forums**.
- **Development of tools** such as maps and guidelines that build local government capacity to direct appropriate development and conserve biodiversity.

The following examples were identified by stakeholders:

- The National Youth Service, which was recently launched, provides an implementation plan that ensures that youth are skilled.
- Business in South Africa is organised to interface with other stakeholders on a range of socio-economic and ecological issues, e.g. National Business Initiative has a Memorandum of Understanding with Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) to facilitate business input to sustainability forums.
- The Johannesburg Stock Exchange's Socially Responsible Index (SRI) is a voluntary initiative that provides an opportunity for business to showcase their progress in making their enterprises more sustainable. South Africa is the first country in the emerging market that has developed an SRI. Also creates an awareness of sustainable development

within the business sector. Other initiatives within business sector include the Financial Services Charter and the Codes of Practice of the Department of Trade and Industry.

- Sustainability reporting has been undertaken by the mining sector using the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines, and is guided by international frameworks for the sector.
- Key stakeholders including labour have contributed to the development of the Proudly South Africa Campaign, which is directed towards changing consumer patterns and creating jobs locally.
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#### *4.4 Additional goals, targets and commitments that should be established for the next 10 to 20 years*

Stakeholders identified the following goals, target and commitments that needed to be established over the next 10-20 years:

- 50% of energy must come from renewables in 50 years and 20% in 20 years. This will ensure that the country meets UNFCCC and JPOI targets and supports the achievement of the MDG goals on poverty alleviation. Renewable energy generation will be labour intensive and protect water resources.
- There must be a one-third reduction in projected energy demand in 20 years.
- There must be adequate information in the energy sector in the next five years.
- Carbon intensity must be reduced by at least 20% within 20 years.
- There must be complete separation of waste in 20 years.

#### *4.5 Stakeholder expectations of the NSSD*

Stakeholders' expressed a range of expectations regarding the NSSD. These are presented in terms of the strategy's scope, characteristics, status and its formulation and implementation.

##### *Scope of NSSD*

- The National Strategy for Sustainable Development should be applicable to the **South African context** and consider transformation imperatives. As a significant implementer of sustainable development strategies, local government needs, priorities and realities must inform and direct NSSD formulation.
- The NSSD should **demonstrate benefits** for stakeholders, clarifying what is expected of each sector.
- It must **align** with other overarching and strategic sector specific policies and legislation and other initiatives. It needs to **address the gaps** in current policy and legislation by articulating an integrated and holistic approach to development.
- The strategy should make the **case for biodiversity**, and to disseminate it among decision-makers and the public.
- The NSSD must **focus** on the growth strategy, and influence the macro-economy, energy development and waste management.
- It must **integrate youth** issues, including young women, rural and disabled young people and orphans who are heads of households.
- The NSSD must feature **poverty alleviation** as its main priority.
- It should highlight the importance of **knowledge development** as a key to global competitiveness.

- The strategy must build on and advance the existing **violence and injury prevention** agenda and infrastructure.

#### *Characteristics of the NSSD*

- The NSSD should comprise an all encompassing vision and mission which captures the imagination and has **broad buy-in**.
- It must ensure a **balanced strategy** that encompasses development and environment. It should focus on the Millennium Declaration Goals, environmental rights in the Constitution, National Environmental Management Act principles and adjust transition to energy for its impact on global climate change and the implementation of the UNFCCC.
- The NSSD should focus on **performance** rather than policy development.
- The strategy should be a strategic **guideline**, blueprint or framework that influences all sectors, and ensures integration early in the development process.
- It should be a **self-reference tool** that serves as a guideline.
- The NSSD should be less prescriptive - provide broad direction and goals to allow for innovation and carefully consider punitive measures for non-compliance in order to balance **regulatory and incentive based approaches**.
- The strategy must be **accessible** to all South Africans including the youth.
- It should clearly define the **institutional and sector responsibility** for implementation and monitoring progress.
- The NSSD should be a **living document** that is reviewed and improved over time.
- It should provide strategic direction and **coordination** to policies and programmes that guide the process of creating sustainable settlements, e.g. Urban Renewal Programme and Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme.
- The strategy should provide **strategic support** to policies, legislation and strategies for integrated waste management and control, e.g. waste, land use, water quality and air quality.

#### *Status of the NSSD*

- Possess a **mandate** from The Presidency and that Departments be obliged to comply with its requirements.
- Clarify the strategy's **legal status**, and hence its implications for stakeholders.

#### *Formulation and implementation of the NSSD*

- The strategy should make use of a process that **broadens stakeholder participation** so that there is greater awareness and involvement. Input from specific sectors (youth, NGOs, business) should be facilitated.
- The NSSD should provide financial resources and sufficient time, especially to the NGO sector, to ensure **effective participation**. Every effort should be made to prevent participation fatigue.
- There must be **ongoing feedback** from coordinators of the NSSD process to stakeholders, and raise awareness progress.
- As far as possible, the NSSD should **utilise established mechanisms** (e.g. Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy and Urban Renewal Programme) to minimise added costs and pressure on existing capacity. For instance, state of environment reporting can be used to monitor progress.
- A **clear implementation plan** should be linked to the NSSD, with sufficient capacity to implement and monitor it. Funding must be sourced and/or allocated to appropriate and practical projects that support sustainable development at local level.

- The NSSD should **strengthen rural programmes**, including improving agricultural production and developing sustainable low-tech business, to make these areas more viable.
- The strategy should adopt a **livelihoods and asset based approach** to development, building on the activities and assets of entrepreneurs, survivors, home-growers, care-givers etc. as a starting point for further support.
- **Relevant and reliable data** must be made available during the course of the NSSD process and beyond to inform decision-making.
- Based on existing indices, the NSSD should establish a **national sustainable development index** that evaluates progress in all sectors.

#### 4.6 Where stakeholders' responses convergence and divergence

From the responses presented above it is evident that there are areas where stakeholders' views converge and areas where they appear to diverge. This section highlights the areas of significant convergence and divergence. This analysis provides readers with a sense of those issues pertaining to the NSSD where there is likely to be broad support and those areas where opposing views could arise and need to be proactively addressed, and if necessary trade-offs sought.

There was convergence on the following issues:

- **Sustainable development** – growing awareness (at least on a conceptual level) among stakeholders of its importance but there is no clarity and/or consensus about how to translate it into practical and tangible initiatives.
- **Sustainable development framework for South Africa** - significant strides have been made putting in place national policy and legislation as well as acceding to international agreements, which collectively hold the potential to place the country on a sustainable development path.
- **Scope and integration of the framework** – although policy and laws have been improved, the framework remains broad and gaps still exist. In some instances policy and laws overlap or contradict each other. This lack of integration was identified as a significant challenge of the country's sustainable development framework.
- **Coordination and cooperation** – the lack of integration results in confusion regarding roles and responsibilities and a lack of coordination or cooperation between government departments, and government and other sectors.
- **Implementation** – international agreements, policies and laws in many instances remain unimplemented. In instances where implementation is occurring it appears *ad hoc* and unmonitored.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – because M&E is weak there is limited feedback to regulatory and/or implementing agencies on the impacts of their strategies, programmes, projects and plans. It is difficult for the public to monitor government or business progress.
- **Context** – the NSSD need to reflect the realities of South Africa.
- **Process and participation** – increasing participation in forums and processes concerning sustainable development. The NSSD process should be inclusive and participatory. There should be broad buy-in to the strategy and ongoing feedback to stakeholders and the public about the NSSD process.
- **Key priorities in the NSSD** - poverty alleviation was identified as the central priority or theme for the strategy. Energy and economic development were also viewed as key priorities.

- **Characteristics of the NSSD** – it should be: strategic in focus and support, balanced (i.e. offer a mix of regulatory and incentive based approaches), clear about its legal status, aligned with existing policy, laws and strategies, supported by a plan of action that uses established mechanisms, and constantly evolves and improves (i.e. be a living document).
- **Mandate and support for the NSSD** – the process should take place under a clear mandate from the Presidency and other Government Departments and involve high-level politicians and officials.
- **Information** – reliable and accessible information was viewed as critical to the success of the NSSD.

There was divergence on the following issues:

- **Legal status** – stakeholders were divided on whether the NSSD should be legislated and strongly regulated or take the form of a voluntary system that guides sectors in making their initiatives more sustainable.
- **NSSD priorities** – a wide range of priorities (e.g. sustainable livelihoods, rural development, agriculture, sustainable settlements, violence and injury prevention, health, education and knowledge development) were identified by stakeholders for inclusion in the strategy. Except for poverty alleviation, energy and economic development, there appeared to be no consensus on the ‘package’ of priorities for the NSSD.
- **Nature of the NSSD plan** – although there was consensus on the need for a plan of action stakeholders differed in their views concerning the content of the plan, i.e. some felt that it should be strategic in nature and speak to the strengths and weaknesses whereas others felt it should be comprehensive.

## 5. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND OPTIONS FOR A PLAN OF ACTION

This section of the strategy highlights a number of strategic considerations for a future plan of action - a plan that builds on what exists and lays down some clear markers on the country’s road to sustainability. The process of shaping a plan that fits the country’s needs would require citizens to exercise foresight to determine what and where we should invest. This process will enable us to optimise opportunities in the future and drive investment towards sustainable development.

It is important to realize that the responsibility for developing, and ultimately implementing, such a plan does not rest with government and policy makers alone. In fact, other stakeholder groups (non-governmental organisations, business, labour etc.) are as important for making progress toward sustainable development. While some of the suggested strategic considerations for action in this chapter are directed at government, many are targeted at other stakeholder groupings. Strengthening the strategy’s implementation will require the mainstreaming of sustainability development principles into all aspects of governance, planning and operation, and indeed in human behaviour.

Against the background of emerging trends<sup>14</sup> in sustainable development presented in Chapter 2 as well as the policy analysis and stakeholder perspectives on the sustainable development framework and targets presented earlier in this chapter, it is evident that there are certain priority

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<sup>14</sup> This section also draws on research undertaken for the 2005 South Africa Environment Outlook, which is being produced by the DEAT. This report is due for release in June 2006.

areas or points of intervention that should form the basis for an achievable plan of action. This section is divided into 2 main sub-sections:

- Strategic sectoral considerations for action: these were identified as issues that affect almost all sections of our society, and are integral to achieving social, ecological and economic sustainability; and
- Priority crosscutting considerations for action: details the overall responses and points of action required to move South Africa towards a positive sustainable development scenario.

### *5.1 Strategic sectoral considerations for action*

#### ***Economic Development and Poverty Reduction***

Economic development in the South African context focuses on, among others, expanding economic activities, improving work skills and creating jobs. It is directed through a range of policies, programmes and strategies notably the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy. More specifically, the country's macro-economic objectives include economic growth, full employment, price stability and balance of payments stability. Macroeconomic policy is aimed at achieving these objectives, often with some trade-offs.

Alongside these is the key political objective of reducing poverty and inequity in the country, which was left in the wake of the end of Apartheid in 1994. It is estimated that the majority of South Africans live in poverty (below the \$1 per day per person) and lack access to employment opportunities, basic services and education. Insofar as poverty also leads to reduced productivity via malnutrition, ill-health and poor education and skills levels, it also acts as a general brake on the country's economic development. The poor are also generally more vulnerable to environmental conditions such as inadequate access to basic services, degraded natural resources, existing climate variability, poor land use practices, natural hazards such as droughts and floods and changes in the distribution of vector borne diseases that cause new outbreaks.

The focus on inequality is also important since, at least over the next decade, growth alone will be insufficient to raise the average poor household out of poverty. Some redistribution of income and explicit poverty alleviation strategies, together with economic growth, are needed to eradicate poverty in the medium term. The burden of poverty, therefore, falls on the entire society. The South Africa Government has taken up the challenge by putting in place the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa – a programme of large infrastructural investments that will supplement existing public investment programmes and act as catalysts for economic development.

The emphasis on growing the economy to provide employment has important consequences for the patterns of consumption and production, and hence ecological sustainability. Specifically, economies are driven and maintained by energy, the production of which causes serious pollution and degradation of the environment. Also, an increase in affluence through employment will lead to an increase in consumption of resources and an increase in the production of wastes.

#### **Possible options for action:**

- Promote activities aimed at meeting the MDGs relating to poverty.
- Support economic development that attempts to balance social and economic upliftment with more efficient and economical use of the natural resources.

- Review and mainstream the principles and objectives of sustainable development into major national programmes aimed at economic growth and development and poverty reduction (e.g. Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa, Expanded Public Works Programme, Integrated Rural Development Strategy).
- Raise public awareness about the impacts of uncontrolled consumerism and as well as offer consumers more sustainable choices regarding the products and services they use.
- Promote education and training opportunities that build appropriate skills – there is a need to address the mismatch between the current skills base and the needs of the economy.
- Facilitate access to sufficient funds for the training of competent scientists, engineers and technologists to advance economic and human development.
- Undertake vulnerability assessments and integrate these into development and land-use planning.

### ***Energy and Climate Change***

The South African economy is energy-intensive, using a large amount of energy for every Rand of economic output. South African energy is dominated by coal, which contributes 70% of primary energy and 93% of electricity production. Local coal is cheap and this results in low energy costs, particularly for electricity, which is the cheapest in the world. In addition to being a major exporter of coal, South Africa's access to low-cost energy has helped develop a competitive advantage by, among others, setting up energy-intensive industry such as aluminium smelting and mining.

The use and production of energy in South Africa has significant local, national and international environmental impacts. The coal cycle is the major source of air pollution and overall waste generation. Because of its reliance on fossil fuels, South Africa is among the top 20 emitter of greenhouse gases, contributing to climate change. Globally, average land and sea surface temperatures have increased, sea level is rising, rainfall patterns have changed, and the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events have increased. In South Africa, projected climate changes over the next 50 years indicate that the western parts of the country will become dryer, that parts of the country will experience shorter rainfall seasons and that there will be an increase in air temperature, particularly in the interior. These changes in climate will have significant effects on all components of the natural environment, on various sectors of the economy and therefore on our well-being. South Africa has displayed its commitment to addressing climate change by signing the Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

The 1998 White Paper on Energy Policy commits the government to the provision of affordable and sustainable energy services, which is focused on demand side issues. It acknowledges that energy production and distribution should not only be sustainable but should lead to the improvement of living standards of all South Africans. Recently the Department of Minerals and Energy has developed an energy efficiency strategy in order to help realize policy goals. A renewable energy strategy has also been adopted which will (with the necessary political support during implementation) have the net effect of displacing fossil fuel and reduce emissions.

### **Possible options for action:**

- Promote and extending the use cleaner production across the country, especially in industry that produces large volumes of waste (e.g. energy generation and petrochemical industries).
- Facilitate the adoption of strategies that reduce dependence on fossil fuels for energy to contribute to the *mitigation* of climate change.

- Establish appropriate adaption strategies for the biophysical and socio-economic environments, which closely link to national development policy such as the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa, Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy and Expanded Public Works Programme.
- Ensure that there is adequate funding and capacity for research on climate change in order to guarantee appropriate strategies and policies are developed and programmes initiated, and that we are able to inform our position in the international arena

### ***Health***

Health is a key element to human well-being, which in turn influences people's quality of life and socio-economic pursuits. Health problems affect many South Africans, especially people living in poor households that lack access to adequate shelter, services and food. Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the most significant threats to human health in South Africa, and a leading underlying cause of deaths. Commonly referred to as a 'poverty' disease, TB has been found to have the highest prevalence among South Africa's poor who are especially vulnerable to environmental degradation. It is not surprising therefore that high numbers of cases of TB are found in areas where there are high concentrations of poverty.

This health situation is exacerbated by the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. There is agreement that the epidemic will slow the rate of population growth and it will bring down growth in gross domestic product, but estimates of the rates of decline vary. The loss of skills in critical cohorts of the working population – the 20 to 45 year olds – may have negative economic consequences. As was the case with TB, poor communities have been hard hit by HIV/AIDS. This has compounded poverty as households attempt to cope with the consequences of the disease. Belated recognition by society of the risks of the disease, and inadequate mobilisation of mitigation and adaptation strategies by the state has exacerbated the risks to the country. More needs to be done across all sectors of our society.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Health System (1997) and the subsequent Health Sector Strategic Frameworks guide the activities of national and provincial health departments. It is policy to provide free health care to children at all public hospitals, and to supply medication for pregnant women that are HIV+. Programmes aimed at rehabilitating hospitals and building clinics have had some success in providing basic healthcare facilities to poor communities, including women and children. In spite of these and other positive developments, more needs to be done across all sectors of our society to ensure the health of South Africans.

### **Possible options for action:**

- Promote activities aimed at meeting the MDGs relating to health.
- Support the expansion of ongoing programmes such as the Hospital Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Programme and the Clinic Upgrading and Building.
- Support the improvement of the control of TB through the Directly Observed Treatment Short Course (DOTS) strategy, paying special attention to the challenges of high case-load and high multi-drug resistance.
- Support the expansion and ongoing implementation of the Operational Plan for Comprehensive Prevention, Treatment and Care of HIV and AIDS sufferers.
- Promote public and private sector campaigns that raise awareness about HIV and AIDS, in particular how to prevent infection and reduce the social stigma attached to the disease.

### ***Natural resource base and biodiversity***

In developing countries such as South Africa, where strong social and economic development agendas dominate, achieving sustainable development or progress towards it can be constrained. Trade-offs often occurs at the expense of environmental integrity, as decision-makers attempt to reduce poverty and deliver basic services. Against this background, the notion of ecological sustainability becomes important, given its intricate links to economic stability and human well-being. Ecological sustainability refers to the condition in which the productivity and viability of ecological systems are maintained at healthy levels over time.

South Africa relies heavily on renewable and non-renewable natural resources and on the goods and services that ecosystems provide. The country's economic development depends on a sustainably managed environment and natural resource base. For example, agriculture and the associated food-processing industry in South Africa will not be sustainable unless soil loss, which is occurring at eight times the rate of replacement, is reduced and this natural asset preserved.

Ecosystem goods and services are the benefits that people derive from nature, and they include air, water, food, and other basics such as medicines and fuelwood. These services are essential for human livelihoods and well-being, the relationships being particularly significant in rural areas and for the informal sector, where the dependence of people on the natural resource base is more direct. Urban centres, such as the much of the province of Gauteng, are highly dependent on water and food from external sources.

South Africans also derive substantial non-material benefits from their ecosystems, including recreational opportunities and aesthetic, cultural and spiritual value. Specifically, wildlife and ecotourism play a large role in the country's economy. In the past, ecosystems have been managed to provide single economic services, without taking into account the trade-offs and consequent losses of other services.

Numerous policies and regulatory and strategic frameworks exist to maintain the country's natural resources, which includes its biodiversity. Many of the older statues refer to the need for conserving environments and species. More recent legislation firmly addresses ecological sustainability. For instance, the National Environmental Management Act (107 of 1998) sets out principles for decision-making on matters affecting the environment. The country's natural resources are governed by a range of keystone legislation including the Biodiversity Act (10 of 2004), the Marine Living Resources Act (18 of 1998), National Water Act (34 of 1998), National Forests Act (84 of 1998), National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999), Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (43 of 1993), and the Development Facilitation Act (67 of 1995).

#### **Possible options for action:**

- Support the ongoing implementation of international agreements signed by South Africa.
- Develop a National Biodiversity Framework, required in terms of the Biodiversity Act, which will guide the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.
- Support the development and integration of natural accounts (e.g. energy, water quality, land use and minerals) into policy- and decision-making processes.
- Promote the ongoing development and use of economic instruments such as charges, taxes and incentives to encourage natural resource management.

## ***5.2 Priority cross-cutting considerations for action***

This section identifies a number of cross-cutting considerations for action. These priority areas are either system weaknesses that require attention, and/or potential leverage points to progress towards a sustainable future. Due to their cross-cutting nature, they cannot be approached and implemented in isolation, but require integrated responses. The developmental challenges faced by South Africa place poverty in the spotlight in the context of sustainable development: for instance, without alleviating poverty, progress towards ecological sustainability will be an unachievable ideal and visa versa. The development of social capital to reduce human vulnerability to environmental change and disasters, real empowerment of women and the youth, and increased participation in public affairs, will be prerequisites for these achievements, as will the extension of access to resources and to environmental justice.

### ***Strengthening implementation and enforcement***

There is broad consensus that over the past decade we have put in place a largely adequate and progressive framework of policies and laws for sustainable development. These however remain mere intentions unless they are actually implemented and enforced. Indeed, implementation and enforcement has been inadequate, and is one of the most important areas requiring attention.

The state of the environment reports, for instance, show general downward trends in indicators of environmental quality, which in part, indicate the general lack of implementation and enforcement. Development strategies and programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme are constrained by a lack of capacity at local government. Financial resources, institutional capacity and stakeholder willingness are crucial to ensuring positive progress to sustainable development. Critically important in improving implementation and enforcement is the building of capacity across all spheres of government, but particularly at local government level.

### **Possible options for action:**

- Support the roll out a national capacity-building programme for local government – it is important that this be conducted at appropriately senior level (politicians, city managers and departmental directors) in order to embed sustainable development considerations in municipal strategies and plans
- Facilitate the adoption of a train-the-trainers strategy developing the capacity and skills of agencies and organizations delivering capacity building services
- There needs to be a renewed focus on the implementation of multi and bi-lateral agreements to improve regional and international governance.
- Prioritize and progressively roll-out important components of policy and strategy ensuring that with each step, key capacity is in place

### ***Access to good information***

Good policy decisions need to be based on timely, consistent, and accurate information. Such information needs to be collected on an ongoing basis. We also need systems that detect trends in the data collected, so that this can be used to modify policy when necessary.

There are serious gaps in data (social, environmental and economic) that greatly hamper our efforts to make better policy decisions. Critical indicators for which we have no adequate data include current land cover, fine-scale spatial information on habitat degradation, some aspects of water quality, air quality and carbon emissions. We also do not have reliable data on genetically modified organisms, human vulnerability, or groundwater use and recharge, and limited

knowledge of some aspects of biodiversity. There is further a need for a consolidated and consistent monitoring and evaluation system. Currently, many data generation exercises such as the population census and national land cover assessments do not coincide with reporting programmes. Monitoring is often not carried out at regular intervals, and in some cases is so sparse that meaningful interpretation over large spatial scales cannot be made.

Over the past few years South Africa has taken steps to improve the nation's database. For example, a set of environmental indicators was published in 2002 for use in state of environment reporting. A draft monitoring and evaluation system for measuring public service performance, including a generic set of indicators, has been approved by the Cabinet. These and other indicators, such as those set out in the Millennium Development Goals and the 2004 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, are reported on in reports such as the South African Environment Outlook and the State of the Nation Report.

In addition to improving the status of information, it is important to ensure that the public has access to this. Access to information and public consultation are key principles of all legislation since 1994. While legal provisions for access to information are strong, implementation of these laws is weak and many citizens are not aware of their rights. This hampers achieving greater environmental justice.

We need adequate investment in research and development to contribute to improved data. Steps to promote research and development in South Africa include the adoption of the National System of Innovation. The base of skilled technical professionals however needs to be grown to be able to respond to these opportunities and to better reflect the demography of the country.

**Possible options for action:**

- Build on the process initiated by the Department of Provincial and Local Government in 2001 to develop a comprehensive national monitoring framework. Ensure a good fit between key sustainability indicators and those reported on in the integrated development planning process at local level.
- Set in place mechanisms to fill the data gaps for priority areas, and to monitor these.
- Make use of existing mechanisms (and where necessary develop new one) that translate science and research into practical policy, and useable, understandable information for the public and decision makers - there needs to be much closer collaboration between scientists and policy-makers, and scientists and civil society. State of the environment reports aim to do this but the usefulness of these needs to be communicated to government and civil society, and the reports need to be written in a non-technical manner.

***Local government capacity***

While the legal and policy framework for environmental management has been continuously strengthened since 1994, capacity and resource constraints at all levels hamper implementation. Local government in particular faces many challenges in this regard. Most municipalities do not yet have the skills or resources to integrate sustainable development considerations into development planning. They also lack the capability to implement new statutory responsibilities. One example is the increased responsibilities in the area of air quality. Local authorities now are responsible for monitoring air pollution and meeting nationally set ambient air quality limits. They also must develop Air Quality Management Plans, issue licenses and enforce laws against polluters. To date, only several large metropolitan municipalities have developed Air Quality Management Plans. While mandatory integrated development plans provide the mechanism to incorporate sustainability issues into planning, in reality the capacity to do this is extremely limited in most municipalities.

In addition to the severe shortage of capacity and resources in local government, it is also faced with high turnover of staff and high levels of outsourcing – for example with respect to integrated development planning. This does not constitute an enabling environment for addressing challenges. Components of good governance include citizen participation, accountability, transparency and a lack of corruption. South African municipalities need ongoing support to build good track records for these important variables, which will ultimately improve the management of human, economic and natural resources.

The critical issue of local government capacity has received very high-level attention and Project Consolidate has been developed to help 136 municipalities function more effectively. Addressing various systemic problems will require building an understanding at the local level of sustainable development. Community development workers, being trained and deployed as part of a recent initiative, will be a key resource at local level and their training should include building awareness and understanding of sustainable development issues.

**Possible options for action:**

- Address the failure of South Africa's current land use planning and its administration to deal effectively with the priority environmental issues identified in this report. This should be done through a range of mechanisms, including improving capacity for strategic environmental assessments, which should underpin the spatial development framework of local integrated development plans.
- Focus capacity building efforts that promote sustainable development at the local level by addressing priority issues such as local economic development, poverty alleviation, public health, air quality and sustainable settlements. Community development workers should be a key target group for awareness raising in this regard.
- Support the roll out a national capacity-building programme for local government, which raises understanding of sustainable development considerations in municipal strategies and plans - it is important that this programme where possible make use of existing training initiatives and be conducted at appropriately senior level (politicians, city managers and departmental directors). This must include the clarification and clear communication of local government roles and responsibilities.

***Shared responsibility***

Analysis and assessment for this strategy has underlined repeatedly that sustainable development must be a shared responsibility. Moving towards sustainability cannot be solely a government responsibility. Civil society, industry and business all have key roles to play if we wish to approach a future of greater sustainability.

It is important for all South Africans to understand that we have joint responsibility for protecting our environmental resources. The link between economic development, improved quality of life and a healthy environment today and in the future must become much clearer in people's minds. We need to fully understand that if we do not conserve our human and natural resources, we are undermining the existing livelihoods of vulnerable people, and are denying future generations their rights. We are also losing key opportunities to redress past inequitable access to opportunities, facilities, services and resources.

Corporate environmental governance has gained momentum and the first Socially Responsible Investment Index was launched on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 2004. The importance of environmental education has been taken up in curricula and hosting the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 has increased awareness of environmental concerns and how

these affect development and equity. More needs to be done, however, to change behaviour so that the actions of every citizen do indeed promote a more sustainable South Africa.

**Possible options for action:**

- Target and develop community environmental education and awareness campaigns that make a clear link with societal priorities such as poverty and employment. Ensure that they incorporate simple strategies for action and are identified with champions who have the power to mobilise support.
- Develop mechanisms to encourage companies and investors to become more committed to sustainability, in recognition that this may enhance reputation, reduce business risks, and that a strong interrelationship between sustainability and long-term shareholder value exists.